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Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Report of the Human Rights Council

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council at its thirty-first, thirty-second and thirty-third sessions and twenty-fourth special session

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions considered an advance version of the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council at its thirty-first, thirty-second and thirty-third sessions and twenty-fourth special session (A/71/623), which was submitted in accordance with the procedure approved in part V of General Assembly resolution 63/263 and with Assembly resolution 65/281. During its consideration of the report, the Committee met representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses dated 12 December 2016.

2. On a related matter, the Advisory Committee notes that the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/141" (A/71/218 and Corr.1) and the related report of the Committee (A/71/584) are before the General Assembly for consideration.

Format and presentation

3. The Advisory Committee notes that, following its previous comments and recommendations with regard to the structure and content of the report of the Secretary-General (see A/69/670, para. 3, and A/70/7/Add.28, paras. 2-5), which were endorsed by the General Assembly, improvements have been made to the subsequent reports of the Secretary-General, including, in the most recent report,

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the addition, in a table of contents, of a list of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council for easy reference and, in annex II to the report, information on conference-servicing costs. The Committee has commented that the report of the Secretary-General remains a lengthy document and in this regard notes that the main parts of the English-language versions of the three most recent reports of the Secretary-General (A/69/615, A/70/562 and A/71/623) are 127, 93 and 134 pages in length, respectively.

4. **The Advisory Committee welcomes the continued efforts made to improve the presentation of the report of the Secretary-General. The Committee nonetheless encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts and make further enhancements so as to make the document more reader-friendly, for example by clearly distinguishing between those resolutions for which additional appropriations are required and those for which resources have already been included in the programme budget. In addition, the Committee is of the view that a list of the mandates that have been discontinued or have expired could be included, with clear information on the consequent financial reductions relating to the programme budget (see A/70/7/Add.28, para. 5).**

Financial implications arising from the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council

5. The Advisory Committee was informed that the report of the Secretary-General reflected 73 resolutions and decisions with financial implications adopted during the four sessions of the Human Rights Council, compared with the 57 resolutions and decisions adopted at four sessions by the Council in the equivalent report in 2015 (A/70/562).

6. The programme budget implications arising from the resolutions and decision adopted at the four sessions of the Human Rights Council give rise to total requirements of $49,385,000, comprising the following (see A/71/623, paras. 4-6 and 268-271):

(a) The amount of $23,019,800, which relates to activities of a perennial or recurrent nature and therefore has already been included in the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017;

(b) The requirements of $26,365,200, which are new requirements for:

(i) The biennium 2016-2017 ($20,861,200), including additional appropriations of $14,910,500 (representing a charge against the contingency fund), in addition to an amount of $5,950,700 relating to commitment authorities approved by the Advisory Committee in 2016 under General Assembly resolution 70/250 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses;[1]

(ii) The biennium 2018-2019 ($5,504,000), which would be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium, taking into account any proposed recurring provisions in the biennium 2016-2017 and the delayed impact of the proposed new posts.

[1] The related appropriation in the amount of $5,482,500, taking into account actual expenditure, is being sought in the context of the first performance report of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

Proposed staffing requirements

7. The Secretary-General proposes to establish 11 new posts (1 P-5, 3 P-4 and 7 P-3) as from 1 January 2017 under section 24, Human rights, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, to support the activities mandated by the Human Rights Council in its resolutions 31/34, 32/2, 33/1, 33/14, 33/25 and 33/30 (see A/71/623, para. 272). As detailed in table 79 of the report, the proposed new posts are as follows:

(a) Conversion of six posts (1 P-5, 2 P-4 and 3 P-3) from extrabudgetary funding under resolution 31/34 on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

(b) Four posts (1 P-4 and 3 P-3) for new or expanded mandates under resolutions 32/2, 33/1, 33/14 and 33/25 relating to protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; the right to development; and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

(c) One post (P-3) in support of the existing mandate on arbitrary detention under resolution 33/30.

8. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that a vacancy rate of 50 per cent was consistently applied to all 11 proposed new posts, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/247, as indicated in the report (A/71/623, tables 18, 24, 49, 62, 71 and 76). The Committee was also informed that overexpenditure resulting from any lower actual vacancy rate would be reported in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2016-2017.

9. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of 10 of the 11 new posts proposed by the Secretary-General and against the establishment of the P-3 post under resolution 33/30 (see paras. 10-12 below).**

Resolution 33/30 on arbitrary detention

10. The Secretary-General indicates that, given that the mandate of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention falls under the category of activities considered to be of a perennial nature, provisions in the amount of $2,009,800 have been included under the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. Nevertheless, the additional requirements in the amount of $84,400 for the proposed establishment of a post of Human Rights Officer (P-3) have not been included. Given the perennial nature of the activities of the Working Group, the related requirements would continue to be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 (see A/71/623, paras. 262 and 263).

11. The Advisory Committee asked why a new post was required for an existing mandate and requested information on the related workload statistics. The Committee was informed that the Working Group had experienced an increase in workload since 2015, with some 1,200 annual requests for action (i.e., 100 requests per month). While some of the requests were addressed through the Working Group's regular communications procedure, others arose from urgent appeals, often jointly with other special procedures mandate holders. Nevertheless, the Working

Group had been able to respond to only some 40 per cent of the requests and had thus accumulated a significant backlog. To improve the situation, it had adopted new working methods with a view to streamlining its review process, but this had not proved sufficient to clear the backlog and address new cases at the same time.

12. **The Advisory Committee recognizes the need for additional capacity to deal with the backlog of cases currently before the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. At the same time, however, the Committee is of the view that such support could be provided by staff funded from general temporary assistance, taking into account that the Working Group has also adopted new working methods to streamline its review process. The Committee therefore recommends that the proposed post of Human Rights Officer (P-3) be funded as a position from general temporary assistance for 2017.**

Resolution 33/16 on technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen in the field of human rights

13. It is stated that the adoption of resolution 33/16 gives rise to additional one-time requirements in 2017 for the establishment of a team of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Yemen funded from general temporary assistance. The team will consist of 10 members: 6 human rights officers, 1 military adviser, 1 security officer, 1 local translator and 1 administrative assistant. In addition, general temporary assistance funding for one Human Resource Officer (P-3) is required for two months to support the recruitment and onboarding of the staff (see A/71/623, paras. 221 (a) and (f)).

14. The Advisory Committee requested justification for the proposed general temporary assistance funding for a Human Resources Officer (P-3). The Committee was informed that the establishment of the team required the rapid recruitment and onboarding of staff, which would result in a sudden, sharp increase in the workload of the Human Resources Management Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva over a brief period. **Taking into account the existing capacity of the Human Resources Management Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the comparatively small number of staff of the team of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Advisory Committee is not convinced of the requirement for a temporary Human Resource Officer (P-3) and therefore recommends against the provision proposed. The related non-post resources should be reduced accordingly.**

General temporary assistance approved for 2016 under commitment authorities and related requirements for 2017

15. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its consideration of the additional resources arising from Human Rights Council resolutions S-24/1, 31/17, 31/18 and 31/20[2] under commitment authorities (see para. 6 (b) (i) above), it reviewed the related staffing requirements proposed under general temporary assistance and made specific recommendations (see annex).

[2] Resolutions S-24/1, 31/17, 31/18 and 31/20 relate to the human rights situations in Burundi, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and South Sudan, respectively.

16. In this connection, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that, while the allotment and expenditure for 2016 had incorporated the Committee's recommendations and reductions, the amounts proposed for 2017 were based on the official oral statements presented during the adoption of the resolutions by the Human Rights Council. **Given that the Advisory Committee has received no additional justification for the staffing requirements under general temporary assistance for 2017, it considers that its recommendations for the staffing requirements for 2016 should be applied to the related resources for 2017, where applicable. The Committee therefore recommends against the provisions under general temporary assistance for 2017 for: (a) one Deputy Coordinator (P-4) ($46,500) and one Staff Counsellor (P-4) ($15,500) under resolution 31/17 and (b) one Human Rights Officer (P-3) ($38,400) under resolution 31/20 (see annex). This would represent a reduction of $100,400 in the revised estimates proposed by the Secretary-General relating to resolutions 31/17 ($62,000) and 31/20 ($38,400). The related non-post resources should be reduced accordingly.**

Other matters

Proposed requirements relating to resolution 32/30

17. By its resolution 32/30, the Human Rights Council decided to extend, for a final one-year period, until 30 June 2017, the mandate on capacity-building and technical cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire in the field of human rights (see A/71/623, para. 160 (b)). Given that the mandate of the Independent Expert on the enhancement of capacity-building and technical cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire in the field of human rights had been considered to be of a perennial nature, the provisions in the amount of $954,400 had already been included in the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. The proposed resource requirements amount to $903,500, including requirements for the final extension of the mandate of the Independent Expert ($867,700) and new one-time requirements for technical assistance ($35,800). Consequently, an amount of $50,900 would be reduced from the programme budget for the biennium (ibid., paras. 164 and 165 and table 45). The Advisory Committee notes that the reduced amount of $50,900 is only 5.3 per cent of the total biennial provision, when the duration of the mandate has been reduced by six months, or 25 per cent.

18. The Advisory Committee further notes that the proposed resources in the amount of $867,700 for the final extension of the mandate until 30 June 2017 are proportionately higher (90 per cent of the biennial provision of $954,400), excluding the new one-time requirements of $35,800. The Committee requested, but did not receive, a satisfactory explanation for the proposed resource requirements for the final extension of the mandate. **The Advisory Committee therefore expects that more information in this regard will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the revised budget.**

Selection of staff

19. The Advisory Committee received, upon request, the following explanation regarding the establishment of staff posts in support of the special procedures mandate holders, as follows:

(a) When thematic special procedures mandates are established by the Human Right Council, the mandate holders are required to undertake core tasks that are guided by the provisions of General Assembly resolution 60/251 and Council resolutions 5/1 and 5/2, which include monitoring/fact-finding, evaluation, communication and research work in general, together with mandate-specific sets of tasks, all of which are perennial in nature and require dedicated secretariat assistance. The staff requirements for each mandate, as determined from years of experience, include one established Professional post, together with general temporary assistance funding for six months for a Professional staff member and a General Service staff member;

(b) In the same manner, the requirement of four established Professional posts per working group has also been determined necessary in order to provide the required support.

Staff travel

20. The Advisory Committee sought information on the criteria for selecting staff to travel with mandate holders in the discharge of their mandates. It was indicated that mandate holders were supported by dedicated staff members throughout their mandates, who provided a wide range of assistance, including preparing and accompanying mandate holders on country visits and drafting associated visit reports. The staff member supporting a particular mandate holder would thus accompany him or her on official travel. Should he or she be unable to travel, however, another experienced staff member would be considered to replace him or her.

Conference-servicing related costs

21. The Advisory Committee discussed issues relating to conference-servicing costs in its previous report, including the need to have standard unit costs for interpretation and the processing of documentation at the various duty stations (A/70/7/Add.28, paras. 17-22). The Committee notes that such information has been included in the report of the Secretary-General (see para. 3 above). Nevertheless, the Committee also notes that that report contains additional resource requirements relating to conference services, such as requirements for sign language webcasting and sound technicians, which are not always requested in other reports of the Secretary-General where conference services are required.

Sign language webcasting

22. The Advisory Committee notes that provisions of $600 and $1,200 for webcasting and filming and screening are requested in a number of resolutions. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the services were not available in-house and involved the provision of a sign language picture-in-picture live streaming service. The local cost amounted to $600 per day to hire a freelance camera operator, using United Nations Television broadcasting equipment.

23. Upon seeking further clarification, the Advisory Committee was informed that, while resources to cover the costs of only one camera operator ($600 per day) had been requested (under resolution 31/23, for example), the filming and screening cost for a one-day session included one camera operator ($600) and one studio director ($600), which amounted to $1,200 (under resolutions 32/15, 32/16 and 32/23). The

Committee was also informed that, for filming and screening with regard to the sign language interpreters, a studio director was needed to monitor and adjust the mixing of the video signals for picture-in-picture live streaming of the proceedings. **The Advisory Committee considers that the information provided with regard to the requirements for sign language webcasting is not clear and sufficient. The Committee expects that more detailed information will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the revised budget.**

Sound technicians

24. With regard to the proposed requirements for sound technicians and recording services, the Advisory Committee notes that the resource requirements are estimated at $700 (resolutions 31/31, 32/7 and 32/23), $1,400 (resolution 32/9), $2,800 (resolution 32/10) and $10,400 (resolutions 32/4 and 33/4). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, for all the resolutions listed, interpretation was required in the six official languages and thus sound and recording services were needed for those languages. Two technicians were required for each meeting, at a rate of $346 per person per day (a rounded total of $700). The calculation of the requirements of $10,400 was based on three sessions of five days each per year. The Committee was also provided with details, upon its request, of the functions typically performed by sound technicians servicing such meetings.

25. **The Advisory Committee recognizes that the requirements for sound technicians have been included as additional resource requirements in the reports of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates for a number of years; however, given that these requests are not always included in other reports of the Secretary-General where conference services are required, the Committee is of the view that additional details on this matter should be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the revised estimates.**

26. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that, in its review of the resource requirements for subprogramme 4 of section 29F, Administration, Geneva, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, a provision of $1,298,800 under contractual services was requested for conference sound engineers operating and servicing conference-room equipment, in addition to driver contractual services. It was indicated in the supplementary information provided to the Committee that the increase in requirements of $44,500 was the net effect of the additional mandates relating to supporting the Human Rights Council and human rights treaty bodies approved under General Assembly resolutions 68/247, 68/268 and 69/262 ($120,600) for sound engineering services, partially offset by the removal of a non-recurrent provision ($76,100) for the biennium 2014-2015. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, while the final provision for the biennium 2014-2015 had been $880,400 for sound engineers under contractual services for section 29F, a provision of $901,600 had been requested for 2016-2017. The related provision currently amounted to $807,800 for the biennium 2016-2017, reflecting adjustments as a result of recosting, which meant that, in fact, the provision had decreased. **The Advisory Committee will revert to the matter in the context of its review of the proposed programme budget for 2018-2019.**

27. **Furthermore, the Advisory Committee considers that, for the sign language webcasting and sound technicians and recording services, other options for the delivery of the services should be explored, including building in-house capacity. The Committee looks forward to examining these details, based on a comparison and an analysis of resource requirements, in the next report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates resulting from the resolutions and decisions of the Human Rights Council.**

Sign language interpretation

28. The Advisory Committee sought clarification as to the various cost estimates for sign language interpretation given in the report. The Committee was informed that the estimates included the cost of both captioning and one staff member (General Service (Other level)) for printing documents in Braille. The difference in costing in the various resolutions was mainly due to the varying need for captioning services, given that some of the mandates required captioning in English, French and Spanish and others only in English. The Committee was also informed that, thenceforth, and on the basis of past experience of actual sign language service usage, the conference managers intended to streamline the cost estimates for such services and prepare standard cost estimates for all the requests, which would make it easier to review the costing parameters of resolutions with sign language services.

29. **The Advisory Committee looks forward to the Secretariat's reviewing and streamlining the cost parameters for sign language services. The Committee expects that the Secretary-General will present standard cost estimates in his next report on revised estimates resulting from the resolutions and decisions of the Human Rights Council.**

Conclusion

30. The actions required of the General Assembly are set out in paragraphs 273 and 274 of the report of the Secretary-General. **Subject to its comments and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the proposals of the Secretary-General.**

Annex

Proposed general temporary assistance staffing requirements relating to Human Rights Council resolutions initially funded through commitment authorities in 2016

(United States dollars)

	Level	Number of months 2016	Number of months 2017	Advisory committee recommendation for 2017	Requirements 2017 (revised estimate)	Requirements 2017 (based on Advisory Committee recommendation for 2017)	Difference
Resolution 31/17 on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic							
Coordinator	P-5	9	3		54 000	54 000	–
Deputy Coordinator	P-4	7	3	Not recommended	46 500	–	46 500
Chief of Investigations	P-4	9	3		46 500	46 500	–
Legal Adviser	P-4	8	3		46 500	46 500	–
Military Adviser	P-4	9	3		46 500	46 500	–
Political Adviser	P-3	9	3		38 400	38 400	–
Reporting Officer	P-3	8	3		38 400	38 400	–
Media Officer	P-3	8	3		38 400	38 400	–
Human Rights Investigator (11)	P-3	9	3		422 400	422 400	–
Analyst	P-4	9	3		46 500	46 500	–
Analyst	P-3	8	3		38 400	38 400	–
Associate Analyst	P-2	9	3		31 500	31 500	–
Staff Counsellor	P-4	3	1	Not recommended	15 500	–	15 500
Archivist	P-3	–	3		54 500	54 500	–
Administrative Assistant (2 posts)	General Service	9	3		60 000	60 000	–
Subtotal					**1 024 000**	**962 000**	**62 000**
Resolution 31/18 on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea							
Legal Adviser	P-4	6	–		–	–	–
Human Rights Officer	P-4	6	–		–	–	–
Administrative Assistant	General Service	6	–	Not recommended	–	–	–
Subtotal					–	–	–
Resolution 31/20 on the situation of human rights in South Sudan							
Human Rights Officer	P-4	7	3		46 500	46 500	–
Human Rights Officer (2)	P-3	7	3	Only one recommended	76 800	38 400	38 400
Administrative Assistant	General Service	7	3		30 000	30 000	–
Subtotal					**153 300**	**114 900**	**38 400**

	Level	Number of months 2016	Number of months 2017*	Advisory Committee recommendation for 2016	Requirements 2017 (revised estimates)	Requirements 2017 based on Advisory Committee recommendation for 2016	Difference
Resolution S-24/1 on preventing the deterioration of the human rights situation in Burundi							
Coordinator	P-5	5	–				
Human Rights Investigator (2)	P-4	4	–				
Human Rights Officer (2)	P-3	4	–				
Security Officer	P-3	4					
Administrative Assistant	General Service	4	–				
Interpreter (local)	National officer	4	–				
Subtotal					–	–	–
Total					**1 177 300**	**1 076 900**	**100 400**